

Cable Building  
57 East Jackson Boulevard  
at Wabash Avenue  
Chicago  
Cook County  
Illinois

HABS No. ILL-1003

HABS  
ILL,  
16-CHIG,  
8-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
*Reduced copies of Measured Drawings*

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Washington Planning and Service Center  
1730 North Lynn Street  
Arlington, Virginia

## CABLE BUILDING

HABS  
ILL,  
16-CHIG,  
8-

Address: 57 East Jackson Boulevard, at the southeast corner of South Wabash Avenue; Chicago, Cook County, Illinois.

Present Owner: Continental Insurance Company (at time of demolition), 310 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago 4, Illinois.

Present Occupant: None.

Present Use: None.

Statement of Significance: Before the Cable Building was demolished in the fall of 1960, it had been designated a Chicago Architectural Landmark by the municipally appointed Commission on Chicago Architectural Landmarks.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Lowell, Lyman and Harris Lessors to Chicago Cottage Organ Company (later became Cable Piano Company) from May 1, 1900 to January, 1933. Released to Aldis and Company January, 1933.
2. Date of erection: March 29, 1899 to December 15, 1899.
3. Architect, etc.: Holabird and Roche; Purdy and Henderson, structural engineers.
4. Builder, suppliers, etc.: W.A. and A.E. Wells, general contractors
5. Original plans, construction, etc.: Microfilm prints of the original Holabird and Roche drawings in the Burnham Library at the Art Institute of Chicago.

Original drawings of the Cable Building in the Archives of back drawings, Holabird and Root.

6. Notes on alterations and additions: In February, 1905, premises were leased--adjoining the Cable Building to the south--in a four story building known then as 244 South Wabash Avenue. This building was joined with the freight elevator shaft of the Cable Building at each floor, and a large opening was made from the first floor front wareroom. These conditions prevailed until April 30, 1910 when 244 South Wabash Avenue was given up and the openings closed.

In 1913, the Cable Piano Company discontinued use of the first floor display salesroom. Extensive alterations were made to the building, including: A new entrance at the corner of Jackson and Wabash for an "L" shaped store; the partitioning of four stores on Jackson Boulevard for rental, and the building of a mezzanine in the "L" shaped store for sales purposes. A passenger elevator was constructed to run from the basement to the fourth floor and the basement was completely remodeled. The cost of these alterations was \$28,495.00, and the architects were Holabird and Roche. Some years later, further alterations closed off the "L" shaped corner store for another store and the entrance to the Cable Store became 303 South Wabash Avenue. The cost and other details of this change are not available.

7. Important old views: Location: Richard Nickel, 1508 Grove Ave., Park Ridge, Illinois; Chicago Historical Society; Chicago Architectural Photographing Company, 75 East Wacker Drive, Chicago, Illinois.

B. Sources of Information:

1. Sources, with location: Mr. Richard Nickel, 1508 Grove Ave., Park Ridge, Illinois.

Mr. C.W. Schild, Cable Piano Company, 20 East Jackson Blvd., Chicago 4, Illinois. (In process of Liquidation, 1960).

Mr. Jancus at Aldis and Company.

2. Published source: Randall, Frank A., History of the Development of Building Construction in Chicago (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1949).

3. Possible sources: Centennial History of the City of Chicago (Inter-Ocean, 1905). Illustration.

Manuscript records of Edward A. Renwick, Architect, in possession of his son, Ralph Renwick.

Prepared by Douglas Schroeder and James DeStefano  
National Park Service  
October, 1961.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural interest: The Cable Building was chiefly noted for its finely proportioned windows. It had, in addition, some features of its construction which were innovations of Chicago architects and engineers. William LeBaron Jenny's first true curtain wall on the Home Insurance Building was constructed ten years before the Cable Building curtain wall. William Sooy Smith's caissons for the Stock Exchange Building preceded the caissons for the Cable Building party wall by five years.
2. Condition of fabric: The building was demolished Fall, 1960.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Number of stories: Ten stories and one basement.
2. Over-all dimensions: 90'-0" on Jackson Boulevard x 135'-10" high. Wabash Avenue Bays 21'-2" and 22'-0" wide (two bays). Jackson Boulevard, Wabash corner bay 17'-1-1/4"; middle three bays 17'-4-1/2", rear bay 17'-4-1/2" (five bays). Basement floor to first floor 11'-5-1/2"; first to second floor 17'-5-1/2"; second to third floor 13'-11-1/2"; third to tenth floors, each 11'-11-1/2". Floor thickness uniformly 1'-5-1/2".
3. Foundations: Timber piles with concrete caps under the column lines, except the south party wall, which was supported by six concrete caissons on hard pan.
4. Wall construction: A curtain wall of brick, pressed brick and terra cotta which was supported on a

steel frame.

The south party wall was masonry bearing wall construction below the sixth floor.

5. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: Wooden doors in iron frames; rolling, steel shutter freight door.
- b. Windows: First floor--show windows on the first floor were set in cast iron mullions; maximum size: 120" high x 157" wide.

Second floor--double hung ventilation windows on each side of five large plate glass windows.

The remaining floors had three windows per bay on the Jackson Boulevard facade and four windows per bay on the Wabash facade.

The wooden window sash was secured by a metal frame embedded in the brick masonry.

6. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Flat, pitched to drains. Built-up composition with sheet metal flashing.
- b. Cornice: Wabash and Jackson facades had an overhanging, decorative, sheet metal cornice attached to an angle iron frame embedded in the brick parapet. The remaining two sides had tile coping.
- c. Openings: Skylights and access door housing.

C. Description of Interior

- 1. Floor plans: Ground floor (first floor) was rectangular in shape, housing shops and services, a truck dock and lobby.

Office floors: rectangular in shape; toilets on the sixth floor and toilet and barber shop on the tenth floor.

2. Stairways: Open well stairs beside the lobby entrance from basement to the sixth floor. Stairs were located next to freight elevator from floors six to ten. Stairs had decorative cast iron risers, newel posts, and trim. The treads were slate.
3. Flooring: The entrance, hallways and corridors had floors of mosaic tile with marble bases.  
  
Stores and offices had maple floors.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Corridor partitions were plaster to the chair rail, with frosted plate glass windows above the chair rail. Walls and ceilings were plaster.
5. Doors: Frosted plate glass doors with frosted plate glass transoms were set in wooden frames.
6. Trim: Wooden chair rails, and marble bases trimmed the corridors; decorative cast iron was used on the stairs and elevator enclosures.
7. Hardware: Notable hardware consisted of cast metal doorknobs and rosettes. Decorative metal (probably cast iron) was used for the elevator screens, with flowerlike designs on the frame.
8. Lighting: Lighting was originally incandescent, but was modified to fluorescent in some areas.
9. Heating: Two Lamb boilers and a coal stoker were used for heating. The boilers were the original installed in the building.

D. Site: The long axis of the building ran east and west.

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